

## **BEALETON SERVICE DISTRICT**

### **Background**

The existing Community of Bealeton, with some 900 homes and an estimated population of 1,900 in the Year 2000, centers on the intersection of Routes 17 and 28. The historic Village of Bealeton, with a typical compliment of churches, businesses and dwellings, developed around the Depot of the former Orange & Alexandria – now the Southern – Railroad. With the decline of railroads as a primary mode of transportation, the village of Bealeton became a quiet backwater. However, recent regional transportation growth has made the community an important regional vehicular crossroad, with access to Routes 28, 17, 15/29, which link to I-66, I-81 and I-95. Furthermore, the Warrenton/Fauquier County Airport in Midland, just to the east, is undergoing major improvements to accept corporate aircraft and shipments that Dulles Airport can no longer handle. Additionally Bealeton residents and businesses wish to host, one day, a station on the Virginia Rail Express (VRE) commuter line.

These geographical advantages have permitted Bealeton to develop new subdivisions whose residents work either in Fauquier, or commute to jobs in Northern Virginia and the Fredericksburg area. The County matched this residential growth with a major rehabilitation and enlargement of Cedar Lee Middle, and construction of Grace Miller Elementary and Liberty High Schools, and is planning the construction of a new library. All facilities are located within the emerging Town Center.

The community, while proud of these neighborhoods, aspires that future growth should generate a more traditional atmosphere as Bealeton reaches its ultimate size of some 3,300 dwellings and 9,000 people. The community anticipates the need for additional public facilities and services to improve its quality of life and meet this emerging resident and business population, such as:

- Regional and town parks, jogging and bicycle trails;
- Additional church, volunteer and fraternal organization sites; and a
- Prosperous town center with a mix of commercial, office and employment uses.

The community has determined that the Service District needs a comprehensive re-design of the existing town center, to serve as a business hub and the central meeting place for Bealeton residents and visitors.

### **1. Existing Characteristics**

#### **a. Planning History**

Fauquier County's first Comprehensive Plan of 1967 recommended the creation of a major suburban community centered on the Route 17/28 intersection. Implementation was delayed, due to the lack of central sewer service. (The need for a central system emerged as soil research, conducted in the 1970's, revealed that the underlying soils would not support individual septic drainfields.) When the Fauquier County Water and Sewer Authority (WSA) extended public water supply and a force- main sewer from Remington, community growth then faltered because of a weak housing market in the 1980's. The 1990's introduced major growth in Bealeton with the construction of increasing numbers of homes, principally placed on half-acre lots. By the end of the decade the community was growing by some 350 dwellings per year.

b. Planned Growth Patterns

The Comprehensive Plan of 1967 was a product of its time. The Bealeton Community was envisioned and planned as low density, standardized cul-de-sac based subdivisions, becoming a spread out, automobile dependent suburb – not unlike Springfield in Fairfax County, or Manassas Park in Prince William County.

This growth pattern was perfected in the following decade, so that the southwestern suburbs of Bealeton embody a competent expression of dendritic road patterns, designed to generate a maximum number of cul-de-sac lots. A downside of this pattern is the lack of any focal place. Other issues include limited access to major roads and neighborhood interconnections, emergency vehicle access deficiencies, poor linkages with public facilities and services. Conventional development also results in children, the elderly and those without automobiles needing chauffeurs, as movement within the Service District is impossible without a car. The County wishes to adjust this pattern with the construction of paths leading to a pedestrian and bike-friendly, human-scaled Town Center, possessing a critical mass of community and commercial uses.

c. Routes 17 and 28

These roads are both the primary reasons for Bealeton's accessibility and growth, and also represent the primary obstacle to Bealeton's successful maturity. Defined on Commonwealth of Virginia Transportation Maps as Major and Minor Rural Arterial Roads, Route 17 forms Bealeton's "Main Street", while Route 28 functions as Bealeton's "Major Collector Street". Neither road performs the dual role satisfactorily. Slow and left/right turning local traffic movements exasperate regional through traffic, while mixing regional traffic speeds with local traffic presents a critical safety hazard. That traffic mixing will only worsen, as Bealeton builds out to its full capacity of 3,300 dwellings and as regional traffic grows by 3–4% per year.

Another key transportation issue associated with Routes 17 and 28 concerns their intersection. Traffic growth on these arterial roads will require continuous intersectional improvements. Were traffic not ultimately diverted, a grade-separated interchange would need to be built right in the middle of the new Town Center. As many communities have realized in retrospect, such installations necessarily depress accessibility to adjacent properties, and thus de-vitalize nearby commercial centers. In the case of Bealeton, the threat of such a facility impacts the viability of the Town Center and the campuses for Liberty High School and Grace Miller Elementary School. *Refer to the Bealeton Transportation Action Plan and the Long Range Bealeton, Opal and Remington Transportation Element of this plan, which include the recommended short-term transportation improvements and the proposed long-term road network.*

Single entry developments, with few existing through roads to adjoining neighborhoods generate a final issue. Route 28, Schoolhouse and Oak Shade Roads, were established for the purpose of conveying milk and farm products to the Bealeton Depot and instead have become principal collector roads within Bealeton's southwestern neighborhoods. Additionally, regional traffic volumes on Route 28 have increased by 3–4 % annually. In an ideal world, these roads should be divided, with left turn lanes in the median where needed. Such a standard would be very difficult to realize now that many developed lots abut these three roads.

d. Community Facilities

Bealeton has two churches, Bealeton Baptist and Bealeton Presbyterian and a historic cemetery, Cedar Grove. In recent years, the community has refurbished and enlarged Cedar Lee Middle School, and added Grace Miller Elementary and Liberty High Schools. A medical facility associated with Fauquier Hospital has recently opened on Station Drive, while the County Library Board is preparing to build a new library nearby. North of these facilities, but also on the east side of Route 17, Bealeton Village Shopping Center, provides for grocery, pharmacy and other local shopping needs. All of this represents a significant building block of community facilities for the Town Center. However, the major residential growth in the 1990's and projected growth in the future will require the creation of additional facilities.



e. Water and Sewer Utilities

Bealeton is now served by an extensive system of water lines and sewer mains. A regional system of force mains conveys sewer effluent to a major treatment plant south of Remington, which discharges treated material into the Rappahannock River. Construction of the force main system was largely undertaken and financed by the Fauquier County Water and Sanitation Authority (WSA). Expansion of the 1.4 million gallons per day plant to 2.0 million gallons is targeted for 2015. (See Utility Element)

The Bealeton Service District's drinking supplies are provided through the Fauquier County Water and Sanitation Authority (WSA) that has a current capacity for over 1.3 million gallons per day. The sources for this water are wells and the existing system can be augmented with additional supplies from designated groundwater resource areas.

f. Natural Resources

The Bealeton region exhibits the characteristic of an old lakebed. While this landscape lacks the visual dynamics of the Fauquier Piedmont, nevertheless the region possesses wide skies and a quiet amplitude.

Local soils, Albano, Ashburn, Dulles, Panorama and Penn, offer poor perk potential for drainfield use and are very water retentive. Streams, such as Craig Run and Bowens Run, lie within moderately concave beds, which generate wide 100-year floodplains given the water flows involved.

Although Bealeton's developed neighborhoods have conformed to the storm water management regulations, required by Federal and State regulation, the resulting open

space was left as a “no-frills, no-mans land” without paths or other enhancements, and represents an ignored resource.

The land adjacent to Route 17 within the heart of the Bealeton Service District rises gently to a broad summit from two floodplains. These floodplains were likewise treated as barriers to local street construction, and not as a valuable community amenity.

g. **Historic Resources**

Bealeton traces a history dating back to the 1850’s, with the construction of the then Orange & Alexandria Railroad. Unfortunately, with new road construction, decay and other misfortunes, there are too few surviving historic resources to warrant inclusion of a historic district around the former railroad depot in the National Register of Historic Places. Though few resources remain, the community is intent on preserving these precious legacies of its past.

Demolition of historic resources within the County and nationwide is a continuing problem. Local historic districts can assist in saving numerous historic communities from inappropriate alteration and demolition. For example, with specific guidelines and the requisite ordinances, an Architectural Review Board (ARB) can effectively serve these locally established districts in a variety of ways.

However, since Bealeton does not have an area warranting historic district designation, the County needs to determine the feasibility and legal authority of a demolition delay ordinance. For example, a property owner or developer requesting a demolition permit from the Department of Community Development could be required to receive approval first from the Architectural Review Board or a Historic Resources Commission. Specific guidelines for that review and action would need to be included in a County ordinance. If a structure is deemed worthy of preservation, a delay period would be imposed for an established period of time to determine structural rehabilitation or relocation. If the structure were rehabilitated and preserved, the ordinance could require that a deed restriction could be placed on the structure for its indefinite protection.

## **2. Bealeton Service District Vision Statement.**

### *VISION STATEMENT:*

- a. Bealeton will be a “people friendly” community of distinct neighborhoods, built to the east and west of a town center. The shopping and recreational options, schools, town hall, offices, library, post office and VRE station of the town center will be located on a Main Street with ample sidewalks, and large boulevard trees. Appropriate employment areas (e.g. storage, light industrial, building trade workshops) will be included in less conspicuous places within the town center.
- b. Housing in Bealeton will range in size, type and price; from apartments over shops, and apartments for the elderly along Main Street; with townhouses nearby; and with lower density single family detached housing in neighborhoods further away from Main Street. The community will be surrounded by large lot, rural housing along the perimeter.
- c. Existing Route 17 will cease to be a major regional route at this location and will become the Main Street of Bealeton. Existing Route 28 will likewise cease to be an intra-County

route and will be the main collector road link between Bealeton's neighborhoods to the east and west of the town center. New local roads in Bealeton will be designed for cars, pedestrians and bicycles on a generally rectangular grid network with sidewalks. Additionally, pedestrian and bicycle paths -- within linear parkland along the 500 year floodplains defining the major neighborhoods, and threading across the neighborhoods -- will link the residential neighborhoods with each other and with the town center.

- d. The community of Bealeton will be supported by a full complement of public utilities; central water, sewer, gas and trash collection. The perimeter large rural lots will be serviced with central trash collection.

#### *OPPORTUNITIES:*

- a. Bealeton is favorably located in terms of roads and rail links to local and regional employment centers to the north, south, east and west. This favorable circumstance permits the community to take a pro-active lead in more managed and balanced residential, commercial and employment growth.
- b. Bealeton is endowed with excellent community facilities, and is in a position to locate more public facilities and shops along Route 17, its future Main Street.
- c. Bealeton is crossed by a number of streams, whose floodplains and wetlands could be the foundation of a unique open space and parkland network.

#### *AREAS NEEDING SPECIAL FOCUS:*

- a. Bealeton does not possess a clear community focus, with a well developed business center, complete with the requisite hierarchy of residential neighborhoods, linked to parks, schools and other public facilities.
- b. Significant and growing local and regional traffic volumes on Routes 17 and 28 make these roads very unfriendly to pedestrians and bicyclists. The community is now a "non-event" to most through travelers on Routes 17 and 28.
- c. Current traffic conditions on and the Virginia Department of Transportation's expansion plans for Routes 17 and 28 (such as a grade separated interchange at Routes 17/28) will further divide the community and prevent the formation and relevancy of an effective center.
- d. The cul-de-sac design of existing subdivisions in Bealeton limits pedestrian, bike and vehicular movement between subdivisions and within the community, and creates very poor traffic conditions along Routes 17 and 28.
- e. Bealeton is currently a bedroom community of houses, whose residents must look elsewhere for recreational, institutional and shopping needs.
- f. The quality of the potable water supply serving Bealeton needs to be improved.

#### *STRENGTHS:*

- a. Bealeton has quality public schools (Liberty High, Cedar Lee Middle and Grace Miller Elementary Schools). New residential growth will require additional new school provision.
- b. Bealeton has potential for balanced residential and business growth because of transportation links to Warrenton, Culpeper, Loudoun, Prince William, Stafford and Fairfax Counties.
- c. The community has historical roots, evidenced by older churches and the old rail depot.
- d. Bealeton has sewer availability, and should improve its water treatment. These water and sewer utilities will permit the community to maintain a defined edge with surrounding rural areas, since the perk potential of local soils is low.
- e. Existing north-south streams, and the associated wetlands and floodplains, provide the basis for clear neighborhood and community boundaries, excellent open space and a potential natural reserve/passive park network.

### **3. Land Use Plan**

#### *Town Center.*

##### **a. Overall Layout**

The plan proposes a major north-south collector road, given an interim name of Church Road, parallel to and west of Marsh Road/Route 17. This street and Willow Drive, to the east, would permit local travel movements as an alternative to the through-traffic and/or congestion on Route 17. Commercial and institutional uses would front on Church Road, with a 90-foot r-o-w that includes a bike route, and Willow Drive for the next 20 years. Once Route 17 through-traffic is rerouted elsewhere, the existing Marsh Road would be converted from a major arterial into an urban boulevard, with planting in the median, street lamps and benches. (See Figure BE-2 of the Bealeton Town Center.)

##### **b. Commercial/Office/Institutional Uses**

Commercial, office and institutional uses would initially be focused on the two roads parallel to Route 17, Willow Drive to the east and Church Road, to the west. Anchoring commercial and office functions on the southern end of Willow Drive is the present medical facility, which will be joined by a new County Library and Post Office. Church Road north of Route 28 would transition in character from commercial to office and institutional uses – such as churches, fraternal organizations and civic groups. Crossing Route 17, these office-institutional uses would conclude just north of Liberty High School.

##### **c. Fire/Emergency Rescue/Police Center**

Additionally, a site is designated in this northwest quadrant for the creation of a Fire/Emergency Rescue/Police Center. This center should have access to both Church Road and Route 17, with a designated traffic signal on Route 17 to be operated by the Center. While the Plan anticipates that these separate organizations would remain distinct

on the site, the Plan anticipates that these will share a community hall for fundraising and other activities.

d. Principal Parks

Annual festivals would be organized along Park Drive, a new crossroad, on 90' r-o-w, located between Station and Center Drives. This road would link the community's Town Square, with the Town Memorial Crescent and Park.

e. Residential Areas and Parks

In-town housing at medium density and a neighborhood park would be located to the west of Church Road. Buffered by institutional and business uses from Route 17, Marsh Road, and bordering the floodplain of West Branch Marsh Run, this housing would possess special proximity to the Town Center, while enjoying the peace of a wildlife refuge in the rear yard. A small park is designated in the northwest quadrant. "Vest-pocket" and other smaller parks should be located throughout the Town Center by developers wishing to obtain density in the higher levels of the medium range.

f. Schools, Parks and Access Trails

The Bealeton area is planned to nearly triple in size and maintenance of educational quality will require matching residential growth with school expansion and the construction of new schools. The plan provides for a new school to the east of Grace Miller and Liberty High Schools. Liberty was itself designed for expansion.

The plan proposes also two regional park facilities to the northeast and southeast of the Town Center. These facilities would be linked with the new western neighborhoods by bicycle trails throughout the Town Center. The trails would cross West Branch Marsh Run at three locations via boardwalks, while a ramp and bridge will span Marsh Road as well. Federal transportation grants will be sought for these trails.



**TABLE BE-1  
BEALETON SCHOOL CAPACITY AND ENROLMENT**

School Name	Capacity	2002 Enrollment	Unused Capacity
Liberty High School	1,500	1,492*	8
Cedar Lee Middle	710	669	41
Grace Miller	583	452	131

\*Liberty High School presently accommodates students from as far a field as New Baltimore

#### 4. Western Neighborhoods.

##### a. Overall Residential Pattern

Development density within these western neighborhoods will continue in the existing pattern of 1 – 3 dwellings per gross acre. Existing subdivisions within the western neighborhoods of Bealeton have decisively established a conventional suburban design style that may be completed as originally conceived, albeit with the addition of pedestrian paths and bike trails leading to the Town Center and schools, and with the addition of neighborhood and fine grained vest pocket parks. The County would encourage development proposals that seek to incorporate elements of a more traditional grid settlement pattern – noted in the section above – to the extent possible given adjoining developments and roads.

##### b. Re-Designation of Route 28

While elements of this plan provide guidance concerning roads within the Bealeton Service District, mention needs be made that Route 28 – west of the Route 17 Intersection – should be re-designated from a minor arterial to a local collector road. This re-designation simply recognizes the functional change imposed on this road with the construction of Meadowbrooke, Fox Meade and Edgewood East subdivisions. This functional alteration will become ever more pronounced as the western neighborhoods become fully developed.



Given current traffic hazards and limited right-of-way on Route 28, improvements on this section of road should focus on key intersectional improvements for the safe and smooth movement of local automobile traffic. Pedestrian and bike paths on this road should be retrofitted through existing subdivisions and cross Bowens Run, via raised boardwalks, to the Town Center.

##### c. Paths Within Stream Valleys and Floodplains

Additionally, the stream valleys and floodplains dividing these neighborhoods have been historically unrecognized as a significant community asset. These resources should be redesigned re-developed as parks, then systematically incorporated into a predominately natural / passive park network with pedestrian paths and bike trails.

(See FIGURES BE-1 & BE-2 of the Bealeton Service District)

##### d. Route 17 – 28 By-Pass

The Bealeton Community will achieve maturity only if long-term through-traffic on Route 17 bound to US Route 15/29 is allowed to reach its objective by some means other than through the Town Center. There is a critical need to separate regional and local



traffic and the proposed streets parallel to Route 17, Market and Church Streets, should not serve as this regional by-pass. Equally, Route 28, west of Route 17, will only function as a safe collector road if through traffic bound to Routes 29 and 17 reaches its objective by some other means.

This Plan proposes to re-direct Route 17 through-traffic to US Route 15/29 onto a limited access highway, on an alignment south of the Town Center, generally south of the Craig Run floodplain and south of the railroad right-of-way. The highway should reach US Route 15/29 in the vicinity of the existing intersection of Route 28. (See Figure 10-SF-1 Southern Fauquier Intermediate Range Regional Road Plan.)

e. Service District Buffer

Land in the southwestern portion and to the north of the Service district will act as a buffer between the more intense residential uses of the western neighborhoods and the rural lands beyond. Average lot size shall be no less than 15 acres. Public sewer or public water shall not serve such lots.

## 5. Land Use and Development Statistics.

Table BE-1 provides data concerning existing and developable land within the Bealeton Service District.

**TABLE BE-1  
BEALETON SERVICE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT ACREAGES**

<b>Land Use Category</b>	<b>Developed acres</b>	<b>Undeveloped acres</b>	<b>Total acres</b>
<b>Town Center</b>	20	55	75
<b>Institutional / Office</b>	0	86	86
<b>Mixed Use</b>	0	25	25
<b>Flex Industrial</b>	0	138	138
<b>Residential High</b>	48	0	48
<b>Residential Medium</b>	114	155	269
<b>Residential Low</b>	382	560	942
<b>Total</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>1019</b>	<b>1583</b>